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ABSTRACT

This teacher's guide for William Shakespeare's play "Henry V" is designed to accompany the Kenneth Branagh Masterpiece Theater film production of the play, and to help teachers use the film in a variety of ways. The guide includes pre-viewing background information, five teaching units, and a pullout poster for classroom display. The guide begins with an introduction by Kenneth Branagh, and a look at the literary context of "Henry V." The first teaching unit, "Viewing 'Henry V'," offers a basic study of the film. It offers a reproducible "Viewer's Guide" for students, giving them a plot synopsis to review before watching the film, and includes post-viewing activities and discussion questions. The next three units are designed around specific themes: "Character Development," "War," and "Language." Each unit includes one page for the teacher--with background information, discussion questions, and suggested activities--and a reproducible page for students featuring excerpts from the play designed particularly for those not reading the play in class. The final unit, "Looking at Film," offers ideas for studying the art of film. (SR)

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A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S

HENRY V

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ALLEN E. MURRAY
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Dear Educator,

In 1989, we joined with WGBH Educational Foundation to bring you and your students the MASTERPIECE THEATRE production of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, along with a teacher's guide to make the experience even more satisfying.

It is our great pleasure to do the same for another powerful production — Kenneth Branagh's masterful and exciting presentation of Shakespeare's *Henry V*.

MASTERPIECE THEATRE celebrated its 20th anniversary last year and we were pleased to accept a special Emmy from the Board of Governors of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for having underwritten the program since its inception.

In promoting MASTERPIECE THEATRE, WGBH and Mobil have said from the start that the medium of television can educate even while it entertains. Thus, it seems only fitting to mark our 21st year with Branagh's daring and different interpretation of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, and provide you with this teacher's guide to help bring home to your students Henry's struggle in handling the reins of leadership.

Interestingly, it was your response to *A Tale of Two Cities* that brings *Henry V* to your school. When asked what videos you used in your classroom, the most popular author by far was Shakespeare. So, the interest — at least on your part — is there. We hope this guide and the MASTERPIECE THEATRE presentation of *Henry V* will whet the interest of your students for more of the same.

Sincerely,

Allen E. Murray

Henry V in the Classroom

The Masterpiece Theatre presentation of Kenneth Branagh's Henry V *will be broadcast on most PBS stations in its entirety on April 26, 1992, beginning at 9 pm. Check local listings for broadcast times in your area.*

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YOU CAN use this film in many different ways. Since it is about two and one-half hours long, viewing the whole program in one class period is not possible. However, perhaps you could schedule a special in-school viewing period in collaboration with other teachers.

You could also assign students to watch the program at home. One particularly effective method is to assign students to watch the film at home and then watch it again in class over several class periods. Or you can show short segments in class to highlight different points for discussion. To do this, set up the video before class to begin at a certain speech or scene, read the text in class, and then discuss the interpretation of the text by the actors.

Using the Teacher's Guide

This guide is designed to help you use the film in a variety of ways, depending on how much time you want to devote to it. We have tried to provide as much information as possible to make the film enjoyable and comprehensible on its own. If you are also reading the play, the experience will be that much richer, but reading the play is not required.

The guide includes pre-viewing background information, five teaching units, and a pullout poster for classroom display. The first unit, "Viewing *Henry V*," offers a basic study of the film. This four-page unit includes a reproducible "Viewer's Guide" for students, giving them a plot synopsis to review before watching the program. If students are grounded in the basic story line, they will be less likely to feel intimidated by the language of the film. The post-viewing activities and discussion questions will reinforce what students remember, give you an opportunity to sort out any confusion, and lead students to the overall meaning of the film.

The next three units are designed around specific themes: "Character Development," "War," and "Language." Each unit includes one page for the teacher — with background information, discussion questions, and suggested activities — and a reproducible page for students featuring excerpts from the play designed particularly for those not reading the play in class. The final unit, "Looking at Film," offers ideas for studying the art of film. The activities suggested in this unit could easily be used with any film you watch with your class.

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Taping Rights
In response to your letters following *A Tale of Two Cities*, Mobil has secured two-year taping rights for *Henry V*. Educators may videotape this 140-minute program and keep it until March 31, 1994.

Ordering Information
For additional copies of this teacher's guide or the pullout poster, contact:
Henry V Guide
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Kenneth Branagh as Henry V.

A Few Words from Kenneth Branagh

Marvin Gaye and Diana Ross introduced me properly to Shakespeare, strange but true. It was during an early English Literature class. Our reluctant group of novice Shakespeareans were all prepared for a turgid beginning to our high school literature studies. As a mixture of nervous dread and dull groans spread around the room, Mr. Grue, our teacher, brought out an ancient record player which he placed on his desk. There was a little excitement. Perhaps he was going to play us a recording of *Romeo and Juliet* and at least save us the toe-curling embarrassment of reading this incomprehensible stuff aloud.

"Listen to this," he announced in a voice that commanded attention.

Imagine our surprise when out of this Edisonian contraption came the familiar strains of the chart hit "You Are Everything." Strains is the right word, as the number began with a low orgasmic growling from the seriously cool Mr. Gaye and a soaringly moist response from Miss Ross's much affected soprano. Mr. Grue stopped the record and faced the bemused class. Where did Shakespeare come in?

"Now what was that all about?"

Perplexed faces all around.

"Sex, you twerps!"

Suppressed giggles all round. Yes, it was.

"Now open *Romeo and Juliet* and let's find out where Shakespeare used it."

The noises of pages turning by excited singers was deafening. I don't think I've ever looked back. Thank you, Mr. Grue.

Many years later, I often thought of Marvin and Diana's help, as I attempted to encourage people to become interested in this often frightening literary ogre. It's not possible to trick people with stunts, but it is useful to sometimes jolt our preconceptions with the reminder (particularly potent for adolescents) that there is great sexual energy and innuendo in *Romeo and Juliet* and that indeed Shakespeare is rife with sexual puns. The point is that Shakespeare's preoccupations remain our preoccupations. We still have family feuds, we still remain fascinated by politics and power (and royal families), we still murder and steal, we still fall in and out of love, and we still go to war.

A play that deals with many of these issues but particularly the latter is *Henry V*. As a drama student, it had always interested me. I learned speeches from it for auditions. Early in my career, I had the chance to play the title role for the Royal Shakespeare Company. The more I worked on it over the years, the more it seemed to me a perfect play with which to convince the larger audience (as I had been convinced through Marvin and Diana) that Shakespeare could be exciting, understandable, and full of meaning for me and for many of us living in the latter end of the twentieth century.

It was not an original thought. People who felt the same way were and are performing Shakespeare in theatres all over the world. But the very best live theatre is seen by only a tiny minority of people. The stage still carries a sense of elitism: it's expensive. In the school I attended, the students neither went to the theatre themselves nor were in an institution that could afford to take them. Yet this potential audience — the majority audience, the audience bored or irritated by Shakespeare, the ones who couldn't depend on the invention of a teacher like Mr. Grue — it seemed to me, they deserved access to this man who I and many others felt spoke so dramatically and inspiringly about our shared human condition. And access not to theatrical voices and stuffy acting, but to Shakespeare through a medium most of them would have grown up in — the movies.

Critics have often been divided about *Henry V*. A modern view is that it is jingoistic — pro-war. In fact, in 1938 a major London production was booed off the stage, because, coming as it did at the height of the Allies' attempt to pacify Hitler over Czechoslovakia, the play's producers were seen as warmongers. It's perhaps a little ironic then that just six years later in 1944 Laurence Olivier's film version was seen in just the opposite way — as a

morale booster, a call to arms. The reasons were simple and underline clearly how the interpretation of Shakespeare is bound up in the political and moral atmosphere of the time in which it is performed.

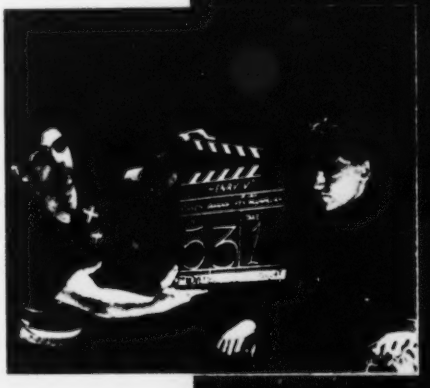
In 1944, after five years of terrible conflict, the character of *Henry V* represented an heroic, fair-minded leader, glamourous, responsible, and (most important) certain of victory. Lines in the play were cut that did not reflect this wholesome chivalric view of the piece. There were no doubts expressed in this version about the "righteousness" of Henry's campaign. Why should there be? This forties' Henry was not really fighting the French but fighting Hitler, whose tyranny rendered the moral considerations simple. The look of the film celebrated a Camelot-like image of England, where knights were honourable and where war was noble and unmessy. The result was a sumptuous film that provided the world with the hero that it needed.

Nearly fifty years later, our world can look at the play in a quite different light. Our media's obsession with the private lives of the powerful and the famous make us far more interested in the personal and private side of Henry V. What makes this leader tick? Shakespeare certainly offers the study in his text. Henry was twenty-seven at the time of Agincourt and the author dwells somewhat on this very young leader's growth to maturity through the play. In the nineties, we could allow his doubt and immaturity to be seen, also his brutality. In our film we were able to restore the scene where he learns of Scroop's betrayal and reacts with a surprising passion and violence. Also his threatening speech to the Governor of Harfleur offers a graphic reminder of the violent reality of mediæval warfare at its most desperate.

Henry impassions his troops before the battle of Agincourt.

We used close-ups extensively to get inside this mediæval world. We illustrated the detail that Shakespeare offers — the wind and rain of the battle; the close, smoky castle rooms. The facts of their existence, the things that connect them to us. We asked for acting that remained true to the poetry where necessary, but sounded natural, real. We took license with historical detail to make the settings and costumes have a genuine essence of their time, but to feel also like real clothes, not costumes from a museum. All the developments in cinema over the last fifty years helped enormously in creating the look and the sound of the finished product so it could convey the immediacy and accessibility that this great humane debate about war deserved.

For above all we wanted to create a movie, not a literary museum. As my teacher did, we've used everything in our world that opens the door onto Shakespeare's and serves him up for our time. But although we've cut things (to make a two-hour not a four-hour movie), we haven't changed the lines or tried to simplify anything. Rather the opposite, we've tried to make as entertainingly complex as possible this extraordinary adventure story that has the power to move us, enrage us, inspire us, perplex us. You don't have to like the film or the character of *Henry V*, but I would urge you, like Shakespeare's Chorus, to enter the experience as you might with any other film and "on your imaginary forces work." If you do find it stimulating, you have Marvin Gaye and Diana Ross to thank.



The Literary Context of Henry V

THREE PLAYS precede *Henry V* in Shakespeare's historical tetralogy: *Richard II, Henry IV, Part I,* and *Henry IV, Part II.* As many of the seeds of *Henry V's* story are sown in these earlier plays, the following plot synopses will help viewers more fully understand the film.

Richard II (who reigned from 1377 to 1399) was the last in the Plantagenet line and an unfit king. At the beginning of *Richard II,* Richard settles a dispute between two of his lords, Henry Bolingbroke and Thomas Mowbray, by banishing both of them. Later when Bolingbroke's father dies, Richard seizes Bolingbroke's wealth and land, and then heads for Ireland to quell the rebellious Irish. The nobles remaining in England, worried that Richard's seizure of Bolingbroke's wealth may be a precursor of similar acts by the king, offer support to the exiled Bolingbroke. When he returns, Bolingbroke forms a rebel army with these nobles, and they force Richard to abdicate. Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford of the House of Lancaster, is crowned King Henry IV, and Richard II is murdered during his imprisonment.

Richard II deals with the ascension of the Lancastrian line, with rebellion, and with the sacred right of kings. It also deals with the burden of kingship and the awesome responsibility of sound and moral leadership. Bolingbroke and his nobles stole the sacred crown, but Richard II did not deserve to wear it.

The story continues in *Henry IV, Part I,* in which Henry IV (who reigned from 1399 to 1413) faces continued internal and external unrest. The Welsh, the Irish, and the Scots present a constant threat of revolt, and the English lords who had helped Henry ascend the throne now feel threatened by him. The Percys of Northumberland — Hotspur, Worcester, and Northumberland himself — are particularly chafed by Henry's demand for complete obedience. They decide that Mortimer, Richard's designated heir, would be a better king than Henry and they organize a rebellion.

Following his father's advice, Henry V goes to war against France.

The main action of the play deals with the full-scale development of this rebellion and the parts the different characters play in it. Three important characters are Prince Hal, Hotspur, and Falstaff.

Hal, or Harry, the Prince of Wales and son of Henry IV (and the future Henry V) is the hero of this play. He is an irresponsible playboy until events demand that he be otherwise. Then his charm, humor, and courage win the audience's heart. When Henry IV, depressed by the rebellion in his kingdom and his son Hal's behavior, suggests that Hotspur (the son of his enemy and rival for the throne) would be a better king than Hal,

One of Prince Henry's dearest friends, Sir John Falstaff will be rejected by Henry after Hal ascends the throne.

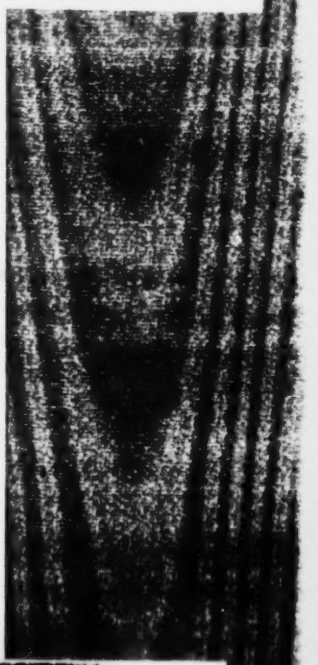
Hal is crushed. He vows to redeem himself in battle and to call Hotspur to task.

Hotspur is the impetuous son of Northumberland, leader of the rebel forces against Henry IV. Hotspur is a brave, honorable, and hotheaded warrior. He is the same age as Hal, and both men grudgingly admire the other's prowess and bravery. As the conflict escalates into open rebellion, Hotspur vows to kill Hal in battle. But when they meet in combat during the battle at Shrewsbury, Hal slays Hotspur and saves his father's life.

Sir John Falstaff has little to do with the actual rebellion. Although Falstaff is much older than Prince Hal, he is Hal's drinking buddy and boon companion. He is the antithesis of a role model for the heir apparent — lazy, dishonest, gluttonous, drunken, and cowardly. But he loves the Prince and is so charming that almost all his faults are forgiven. Hal's scenes with Falstaff and his cronies provide a comic subplot within the play, and they will play an important role in revealing Hal's character in *Henry V*.

The play ends with the main threat of the rebellion crushed, and Henry IV and his sons Prince John and Prince Hal departing to hunt down and eliminate the rest of the rebels.

Katherine asks her maid Alice to teach her English, knowing that if Henry wins the war, she will marry him.



IN HENRY IV, PART II, Hal has not completely abandoned his wild ways, but his proven bravery in battle and his loyalty to his father now make his reckless behavior less distressing. However, the King is still worried about the fate of England when Hal becomes king. As the old King nears death, Hal assures his father of his love for him and his resolve to be a good king. King Henry then confesses to his son that he won his crown through treachery, and he prays for forgiveness for deposing Richard II, the anointed king. He gives Hal two final pieces of advice: to listen to trusted advisers and to unify the English lords with a foreign war. England at this time was in the midst of the Hundred Years' War, an ongoing but intermittent war with France. The foreign war that Henry IV suggests is an English offensive against France. Henry IV then dies and Prince Hal is crowned Henry V (1413–1422).

Henry faces a bitter conflict when he must decide whether to hang Bardolph, a companion from his wilder youth, who has stolen from a French church.

When Falstaff, who had been banished by the Chief Justice, learns that Hal has become king, he returns to London confident that Hal will welcome and reward him at court. Hal, however, surprises Falstaff with a chilling speech and warns him to mend his ways and stay away from him. The advisers surrounding the young king take heart as they witness his integrity and resolve. The play ends with the nobles united behind Henry and ready for war. Internal rebellion has been quelled.

In *Henry V*, the young king faces the awesome responsibility of the throne. We will see him struggle to become a strong, moral king, to heal the scars left over from the rebellion, and to expand his empire into France. His two mentors, his father, the good but besmirched King Henry IV, and his old friend Falstaff, the teacher of his reckless youth, are dead. He must go forward alone.

Viewing Henry V

This unit consists of these two pages plus the two reproducible student handouts on pages 8 and 9. It is designed to prepare your students before viewing *Henry V* so they can understand and enjoy the film, and to enrich their discussion after viewing. After completing this unit, you may want to explore the film more thoroughly by using all or part of the other thematic units.

Mistress Quickly tends to Falstaff on his deathbed.

Before Viewing

Before watching the film, review "The Literary Context of *Henry V*" on pages 4–5. You may also want to read or distribute Kenneth Branagh's discussion of Shakespeare and his thoughts about this film on pages 2–3. Photocopy and distribute the "Viewer's Guide to *Henry V*" on page 8 and read it with your class to make sure students understand the plot. You may also want to point out the following:

- The events in this film really happened. It takes place from 1413 to 1415 in England and France (although Shakespeare wrote the play in 1599). At that time, the English and the French had been enemies for years, and Henry's attack on France is part of the Hundred Years' War between the two countries (1337–1453). Henry V, who ascended the throne at twenty-six, was one of the best-loved English kings and a military hero.

- Henry V had no true claim to the French throne. Also, since his father Henry IV had overthrown Richard II to become king, even his claims to the English throne were tenuous.

- Henry had been a wild and reckless prince, but he claims that he learned about the common man during his "riotous youth." His youthful irresponsibility and his newfound resolve are often referred to throughout the film. He is determined to be a good king. His belief in God and desire to do the right thing are very important to him.

- Flashbacks in the film (golden, smoky scenes in a tavern) show Henry as young Prince Hal (these scenes are taken from *Henry IV*). The large man in the first flashback is Sir John Falstaff, Hal's best friend. Henry rejects Falstaff when he becomes king.

The Themes of Henry V

A NUMBER of themes are central to this film. Listed below are some of the most important, which can serve as focal points for discussion or writing assignments.

King Henry's moral and emotional growth
Henry goes through subtle changes during the course of the film, as he comes of age, turns his back on his wild ways, and assumes the responsibilities of leadership. The film focuses on his internal struggles when, for example, he must banish Falstaff or execute Bardolph.

The burdens of leadership
Henry must face up to the isolation of kingship and the weighty demands of his subjects: "Let us our lives, our souls,/Our debts, our careful wives,/Our children, and our sins, lay on the King! We must bear all" (IV.1.223–226). He must assume responsibility for the death and sacrifice of war, and bear the guilt of knowing his father usurped the crown from Richard II.

The nature of power
The film explores power and who wields it. It portrays Henry as both a powerful king and a pawn in the power struggle between church and state. It examines how Henry learns to wield his power and his insights about governing, "for when lenity and cruelty play for a kingdom, the gentler gamester is the soonest winner" (III.6.112–113); the power of his common touch with the soldiers; the power of his simple charm with Katherine; and the remarkable power of his oratory.

Patriotism
This film features the stirring speeches of a valiant warrior king. It portrays the struggle and victory of order over the chaos of rebellion. When Shakespeare wrote the play, it was not only to glorify Henry V but also to glorify Elizabeth I and England's greatness during her reign.

War
This film raises questions about the price and nature of war. It explores whether or not Henry uses war to establish his own strength. The issues it presents are not only relevant to fifteenth-century Agincourt, but also to the twentieth century, the wars in Vietnam and the Persian Gulf, and the turf battles in our cities.

Post-Viewing Activities

1. Before you begin discussion, have students choose an image or brief scene from the film that lingers in their minds after the film is over. Ask them to take ten minutes to write down a description of the scene and why they remembered it. Then have them share their thoughts with the class.

2. Listed below are random scenes and images from the film. What is important about each scene?

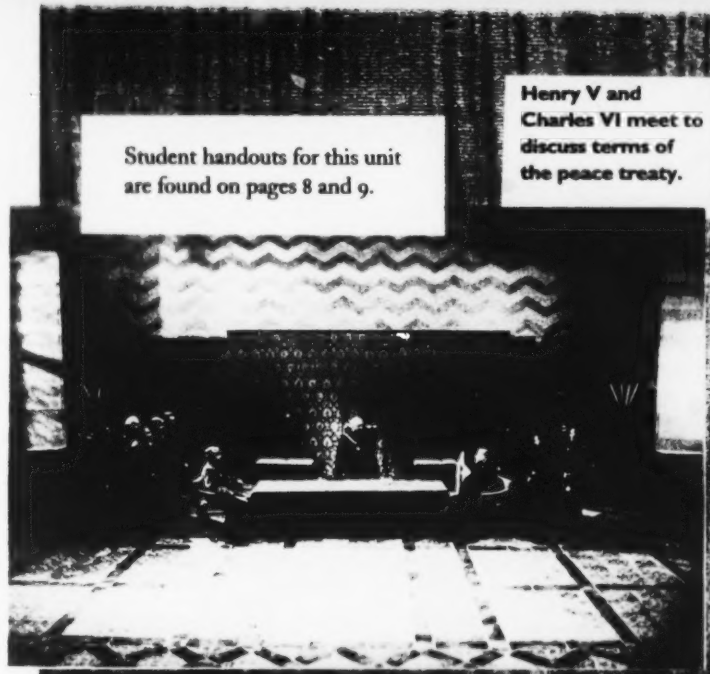
- Henry borrows Sir Thomas Erpingham's cloak
- Katherine's English lesson
- the gift of tennis balls
- Canterbury explains the Salic law to the English lords
- Henry demands the surrender of Harfleur
- the Dauphin describes his horse
- Bardolph is hanged
- Henry learns the numbers of the French and English dead
- Exeter yanks the medallions off Scroop, Grey, and Cambridge

3. Photocopy and distribute the plot graph on page 9. Ask students to plot the events of the film according to their importance in the overall plot, and answer the questions on the sheet by referring to their graphs.

4. Have the class make a storyboard of the film. Assign groups or individuals to draw or paint specific scenes and then label them. Arrange the drawings in sequential order to reveal the plot of *Henry V*.

See also the discussion questions and suggested activities in

- **Character Development:** pp. 10–11
- **War:** pp. 12–13
- **Language:** pp. 14–15
- **Looking at Film:** p. 16



Student handouts for this unit are found on pages 8 and 9.

Henry V and Charles VI meet to discuss terms of the peace treaty.

Henry demands to know who has won the day after the battle of Agincourt.

A Viewer's Guide to Henry V

Viewing Hints

This film is an adaptation of William Shakespeare's play written in 1599. Because the actors are English and the language is old-fashioned, it takes a few minutes to become attuned to the dialogue. Don't worry about understanding every word. Visual images are also important. If the dialogue is confusing, pay attention to the body language and acting. If you're getting lost in the words, focus instead on the sound, the rhythm, and the way the words make you feel. Even if you find it confusing for a while, you'll probably catch on again. The plot synopsis below will help you follow the action of the film.

Plot Synopsis

The film is introduced by the Chorus, a character who appears from time to time throughout the film to tell the audience how to picture each scene. In the first scene, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely plot to convince King Henry to go to war with France. They have interpreted the Salic law — an ancient law that dictates who can and cannot inherit the throne — to justify Henry's claim to the French crown and to rouse a war that will benefit the Church and themselves financially.

In the throne room, the ambassador from France (named Montjoy) tells Henry that his claims to the French throne have been rejected. Montjoy brings him an insulting gift of tennis balls from the Dauphin (the heir to the French throne). The tennis balls are a reference to Henry's frivolous youth. This insult is all Henry needs to strengthen his resolve to go to war.

The scene changes to the Boar's Head Tavern, where Bardolph tries to prevent a fight between Nym and Pistol. The three men are old friends of Henry's, all of whom used to drink and carouse together before he was king. Upstairs, Sir John Falstaff is dying. The scene fades into a flashback (a golden, smoky scene) showing Falstaff drinking in the tavern and Henry entering and embracing him. It then moves forward in time to when Henry becomes King and rejects Falstaff. According to Mistress Quickly, Henry's rejection breaks Falstaff's heart and kills him.

The Chorus reappears and introduces three knights — Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey — who have conspired with the French to assassinate Henry. Henry discovers their treason, orders their execution, and then sails for France. Back at the tavern, Falstaff has died. His cronies and the Boy leave to join Henry's army.

In the first major battle, Henry attacks the French town of Harfleur and demands its surrender. When the governor yields, Henry orders Exeter to treat the town with mercy, and Henry and his army begin the march on to Calais. Meanwhile, at the French court, the King's daughter Katherine begins English lessons, knowing she will be married to Henry if he is victorious.

Henry's weary army approaches Agincourt. Despite Henry's orders against looting, his old friend Bardolph has stolen a small, silver plate from a church. In a flashback, Henry sees Falstaff and Bardolph in a drinking contest where their conversation foreshadows Bardolph's death. Henry orders his execution. Montjoy appears before the weary band and asks Henry to give himself up for ransom but Henry refuses.

The night before the battle, the French Dauphin and his knights eagerly await the morning. In the English camp, Henry disguises himself in a cloak and wanders among the battle-weary troops. He prays for courage for his soldiers and for forgiveness for his father's sin of taking the throne by force. The sun rises on the field of Agincourt. What happens next is up to you to find out!

Student Activity

Plot Graph

This graph will help you map out the plot and pinpoint the climax of *Henry V*. The major events of the film have been listed on the horizontal axis. Determine how interesting or important each event is in the overall plot and enter that level on the graph.

Assignment

Answer these questions on a separate sheet of paper.

Looking at your graph, what is the highest point? Why is that point the most significant? What issues are addressed there and how are they resolved?

Events

1. The Dauphin sends Henry a gift of tennis balls.
2. Henry decides to go to war.
3. Henry orders the execution of Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey.
4. Harfleur falls to Henry's army.
5. Katherine begins her English lessons.
6. The French plan their revenge.
7. Henry executes Bardolph.
8. Henry rejects France's bid for his ransom.
9. Henry wanders disguised among his men the night before battle.
10. Henry prays for courage for his soldiers and for forgiveness for his father's sin.
11. Henry delivers the St. Crispin's Day speech to his men.
12. Henry signals the initial charge at the battle of Agincourt.
13. York is killed.
14. Henry asks Montjoy who won the day.
15. Henry orders his soldiers to credit God with their victory.
16. Henry carries the Boy across the battlefield.
17. Henry courts Katherine, and she agrees to marry him.
18. The French and the English sign a treaty.

Character Development

Background Information

UNDERSTANDING the character of Henry is critical to understanding the film. The truest portrait of this complex young king is a composite of the various aspects of his personality and the world in which he lives.

He is a man of contradictions.
Henry warns Canterbury not to lead him into an unjustified war that will spill innocent blood. Then he describes in dreadful detail how he will spill French blood because the Dauphin sent him tennis balls — wholesale destruction to get even with a bad joke. He boasts of what he will accomplish in battle, and yet when victorious, he gives all the credit to God.

He lives in a world of contradictions.
The Archbishop of the English Church, while representing honesty and peace, leads Henry into international robbery and war. His best friend Scroop abandons him to France just as he has abandoned his friend Falstaff. And his own father Henry IV advises him to make war abroad in order to keep the peace at home.

As a king, he is an honorable as well as a brutal warrior.
He promises the Governor of Harfleur he will dash the heads of elder townsmen against the walls and impale innocent infants on pikes. Yet he orders his soldiers to treat the vanquished with mercy and executes his old friend Bardolph for stealing from the enemy.

As a man, he must be a king.
He is painfully aware of the tremendous responsibilities he carries for his subjects and soldiers. He feels isolation and criticism, "subject to the breath/Of every fool..." And he feels the emotions his subjects feel: terrible anger after the boys are murdered at Agincourt; exhaustion after battle; embarrassment when courting a lovely young woman.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the contradictions in Henry's personality? What internal conflicts does Henry face? Do we ever see Henry struggle? Does he seem like a real person to you? Has the king in Henry destroyed the man in Henry?

2. Why does Henry visit his troops in disguise on the eve of battle? What do we learn about Henry in this scene?

3. Henry is capable of great concern for common people and also great brutality. Where does he show this concern? Where does he show brutality?

4. How does the way the French herald Montjoy feels about Henry change as the film progresses? What do you think accounts for this change? In what ways does this change in attitude reflect changes in Henry? How does Montjoy show this change?

Henry proves his mettle as a fierce warrior king.

Suggested Activities

1. Photocopy and distribute the student activity on the facing page as an in-class or homework assignment. Discuss students' responses. You may also wish to replay the tennis ball speech and discuss how Branagh interprets the language and gives it meaning.

2. It's 1992 in the United States. Henry Lancaster (Henry V) is running for President. Write his campaign speech. You're running for President against him. Write your campaign speech.

3. Henry V is a British hero. Think of an American hero or heroine who is similar to him. Write a description of your heroic American and then compare him or her to Henry.

4. Write two entries that Henry might have made in his journal. Consider entries about how he felt after the Dauphin's gift of tennis balls, after he finds out his friend Scroop has betrayed him to France, after he orders the execution of Bardolph, the night before the battle of Agincourt, or the day after the battle.

5. You're interviewing Katherine for a slick, glossy magazine. The headline of your article reads: "The Real Harry — Only Katherine Knows and TELLS!" Write that article.

Student Activity

Character Development

To understand this film, you must understand Henry, and to understand Henry, you must think about both what he says and what he does. For example, think of the scene in which Henry is given a gift of tennis balls by the Dauphin. What does this speech show us about Henry's character?

HENRY:

We are glad the Dauphin is so pleasant with us.
His present, and your pains, we thank you for.
When we have matched our rackets[1] to these balls,
We will in France, by God's grace, play a set
Shall strike his father's crown[2] into the hazard[3].

. . . . . .

And we understand him well,
How he comes o'er us with our wilder days,
Not measuring what use we made of them.

. . . . . .

But tell the Dauphin I will keep my state[4],
Be like a king, and show my sail of greatness,
When I do rouse me in my throne of France.

. . . . . .

And tell the pleasant Prince this mock of his
Hath turned his balls to gun-stones[5], and his soul
Shall stand sore chargèd[6] for the wasteful vengeance
That shall fly with them: for many a thousand widows
Shall this his mock mock out of their dear husbands;
Mock mothers from their sons, mock castles down,
And some are yet ungotten and unborn
That shall have cause to curse the Dauphin's scorn.

. . . . . .

So get you hence in peace; and tell the Dauphin
His jest will savour but of shallow wit
When thousands weep more than did laugh at it.
(1.2.260–295)

Assignment

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Why did the Dauphin send the tennis balls? Why did he think he could get away with it?

2. How does Henry respond? What does the language he chooses reveal about him? Is his response appropriate? Explain.

3. Find the lines where Henry implies that the Dauphin is judging him for the way he was in the past. Has anyone ever made fun of you because of something silly or foolish you did when you were younger? What were the circumstances? How did you react? Was your reaction similar to or different from Henry's?

- *rackets* (1) tennis rackets; (2) noises of gunfire
- *crown* (1) coin staked in a game; (2) symbol of majesty
- *hazard* (1) in tennis at that time, an opening in the wall; hitting the ball into it scored a point; (2) jeopardy
- *keep my state* fulfill the role of king
- *gun-stones* cannonballs (originally of stone)
- *sore chargèd* sorely burdened with responsibility
- *wasteful* destructive

War

Background Information

IF HENRY is the controlling figure in this film, then war is the driving force. War makes up the substance of the plot: its causes, the rituals of diplomacy, the mobilizing of an army, strategizing, discipline, heroism, courage, and horror. Over the years, the face of war has been portrayed differently in productions of *Henry V*. In this film, stress has been placed on the misery and suffering of war as well as on the moments of compassion and courage.

The film may not clearly explain for your students how the English overcame immeasurable odds to win the battle of Agincourt. They were vastly outnumbered; the English soldiers were exhausted and sick while the French were fresh. So how did they do it?

England's first line of defense was a row of pointed stakes, behind which stood English yeomen armed with longbows. The French knights on horseback could not get past the stakes. Then the English archers shot hundreds of arrows at them. Struck by the arrows, the French knights were thrown to the ground where they were captive in their own armor — too heavy to get back on their horses or in some instances just to get up. Many were trampled to death or drowned. The English yeoman and the French armor won the day for Harry.

The Dauphin, Montjoy, Orleans, and the Constable arrogantly survey the battlefield.

The French face defeat.

Suggested Activities

1. Photocopy and distribute the student activity on the facing page as an in-class or homework assignment. Then discuss the two speeches with the class. You may want to replay the scenes in the film where Henry delivers the two speeches.

2. Draw a recruitment poster for Henry's army.

3. Write accounts of the battle from two perspectives: first as it might appear in a French newspaper and then in an English newspaper.

4. You're a French soldier. Write a letter home telling about the battle of Agincourt. Start the letter the night before the battle and finish it the next day after the battle is over.

5. What differences and similarities exist between war then and now? Consider the causes of war, the mobilization of an army, the weapons used, the way the battle is fought, and the involvement of other nations. Think of yourself as a soldier on an average day during a war in 1415 and in 1992 (or compare the experience of soldiers at Agincourt with those involved in the Persian Gulf war). What would be similar and what would be different about your experience?

Discussion Questions

1. How do the French and English armies compare before the battle of Agincourt? Be sure to include the relative size of each army, their attitudes, their weapons, and their hopes of success. What do you expect to happen? Why? How do each look after the battle?

2. Which scenes in the film portray the violent aspect of war? Which show the compassionate and courageous side of human nature? What does this film say about war? Support your answer with examples from the film.

3. What role do God and religion play in this film? How do Henry's religious beliefs affect his military leadership?

4. Do you think Henry was justified to start this war? Would you feel the same way if he had lost and his people had been slaughtered? Can you think of parallels in our time where the success or failure of a war affected how we valued our involvement?

Student Activity

Do we see humankind at its best or at its worst during wars? Are there moments of glory and moments of despair? Can war be justified? These are questions that Shakespeare grappled with and that we still grapple with today.

Read the two speeches below. The first follows the attack on Harfleur, the second precedes the battle of Agincourt. What do they say about the different faces of war?

Assignment

Answer these questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. Whom does Henry address in each speech? What is Henry trying to achieve with each? Does he succeed? Compare and contrast the two speeches. Use examples of language to support your argument.

2. Imagine that you're a soldier who has followed Henry through the mud and muck. How does each speech make you feel?

I. HENRY: Therefore, you men of Harfleur,
Take pity of your town and of your people
Whiles yet my soldiers are in my command,
Whiles yet the cool and temperate wind of grace
O'erblows the filthy and contagious clouds
Of heady murder, spoil, and villainy.
If not, why, in a moment look to see
The blind and bloody soldier with foul hand
Defile the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters;
Your fathers taken by the silver beards,
And their most reverend heads dashed to the walls;
Your naked infants spitted upon pikes,
Whiles the mad mothers with their howls confused
Do break the clouds.

. . . . . .

What say you? Will you yield and this avoid?
Or, guilty in defence, be thus destroyed?
(III.3.27–44)

II. HENRY: This day is called the Feast of Crispian:

. . . . . .

He that shall see this day, and live old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
And say, "Tomorrow is Saint Crispian."
Then will he strip his sleeve, and show his scars,
And say, "These wounds I had on Crispin's Day."

. . . . . .

This story shall the good man teach his son;
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembèrd —
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition;
And gentlemen in England now abed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap, whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's Day.
(IV.3.40–67)

Language

Background Information

SHAKESPEARE'S language is like an onion. If you peel off one layer, there is another beneath it. This depth and richness of language accounts in part for the universality and timelessness of Shakespeare's work. Here are some points about language you may wish to discuss with your students:

- One of Shakespeare's devices in *Henry V* is the Chorus. It offers the audience a description of Henry V and reminds them of his greatness and valor. It tells the audience what to expect and what to imagine as the film proceeds. It supports and applauds Henry and England and creates an heroic and epic tone.

- The speeches of the self-serving politicians who advise Henry — Canterbury and Ely, his knights and princes — serve as a counterpoint to the lofty tones of the Chorus' speech. These speeches are characterized by a gritty reality. These two levels of language — the eloquent, lofty speeches of the Chorus and the terse, pragmatic speeches of the men of government and war — work together to create some of the tension and impact of the film.

- Henry himself is a great orator. His skillful rhetoric allows him to accomplish his goals: gaining an allegedly legal mandate from the Church to invade France; bullying the Governor of Harfleur to surrender; inspiring his small and tired army to great success; and courting and winning Katherine. He crafts his speeches perfectly for every occasion and every audience.

The Chorus gives the audience additional information.

Discussion Questions

1. Which speech do you remember as Henry's finest? What makes it memorable?

2. Propaganda, both to evoke pride in the home country and rage against the enemy, is a valuable weapon in wartime. What do you see as propaganda in this film? Who is the propagandist? Give examples to support your answers. Think about examples of propaganda in our day. What propaganda have you experienced? What purposes did it serve? If you recognize something as propaganda, can it still succeed in its goal?

3. In a work of art, tension is the balance between opposing forces. What creates the tension in this film and what are the opposing forces?

4. Do you remember the times the Chorus appears in this film? What kinds of information does he add? What did you learn from him? Is he necessary? Could he be eliminated? Support your answers.

Henry uses gentler words to conquer Katherine.

Suggested Activities

1. Photocopy and distribute the student activity on the facing page as an in-class or homework assignment. Then discuss the speeches with the class. You may want to replay these scenes in the film.

2. Although many people who see this film do not speak French, they still understand what happens in the scene between Katherine and her maid Alice. Create your own language to replace the French in this scene. Enact the scene for your class.

3. Suppose this play was being performed in a contemporary setting and style. Write a rap song for the Chorus that tells the audience what to think about Henry.

4. Take a scene and write an internal monologue for the characters to show what they're really thinking.

Student Activity

Language

There are many different levels of meaning in the film that are expressed through the language. Reading and discussing portions of some speeches will help you both clarify and explore how Shakespeare used language to suggest different ideas. Read these speeches and answer the questions on a separate piece of paper.

The Courting Scene

KATHERINE: Is it possible dat I sould love de *ennemi* of *France?*

HENRY: No, it is not possible you should love the enemy of France, Kate; but in loving me you should love the friend of France, for I love France so well that I will not part with a village of it — I will have it all mine: and Kate, when France is mine, and I am yours, then yours is France, and you are mine.

(V.2.170–176)

2. How does the language in this speech differ from that of the Chorus both in style and tone?

3. How does Henry use language to persuade Katherine and to get around her logic?

HENRY: O, Kate, nice customs curtsy to great kings. Dear Kate, you and I cannot be confined within the weak list of a country's fashion. We are the makers of manners, Kate; and the liberty that follows our places stops the mouth of all find-faults — as I will do yours...

(V.2.265–269)

5. Do you think Harry really loves Kate? What does this speech reveal about his feelings? Do you think Kate loves him?

6. Consider all three speeches from this scene and describe the relationship between Henry and Katherine.

CHORUS: For forth he goes and visits all his host,
Bids them good morrow with a modest smile,
And calls them brothers, friends, and countrymen.

. . . . . .

A largess universal, like the sun,
His liberal eye doth give to every one,
Thawing cold fear, that mean and gentle all
Behold, as may unworthiness define,
A little touch of Harry in the night.

(IV.PROLOGUE.32–35, 43–47)

1. What is "a little touch of Harry"? Identify the simile that describes Henry's generosity. What does this speech say about Henry as the leader of his army? How does this picture compare to other impressions of Harry?

4. How could you interpret Kate's response? What does Henry's reaction portray about his personality?

HENRY: But, Kate, dost thou understand thus much English — canst thou love me?

KATHERINE: I cannot tell.

HENRY: Can any of your neighbours tell, Kate?

(V.2.194–196)

Looking at Film

Background Information

UNDERSTANDING how this film works, how it relates to the play, and how it affects the audience will make *Henry V* even more accessible to student viewers. When talking about film as a medium for expression, remind students that all the aspects of a film are consciously chosen; nothing happens haphazardly. The lighting, the casting, the lines from the play that are cut, the lines that are repositioned (primarily the Chorus), the camera work, the music — all must be planned to bring about one unified piece of art.

Watch different scenes of the film a second time and consider them not just for content but also for production values. How is the camera used? Does it look up or down into faces and scenes or does it face them head on? Does the director use close-ups or long shots? Watch a scene with the sound off and concentrate on the images, or close your eyes and listen to the soundtrack and music. What role does music play?

1. How is the initial scene between Canterbury and Ely shot? How does the tightness of the camera shot on the characters' faces accentuate the feeling of conspiracy?

2. Film directors often use visual images as metaphors just as writers use words. What does the opening image of Henry standing dwarfed and alone in the towering doorway say to you? What about when he walks forward and finally fills the space?

3. How would you describe the English-lesson scene with Katherine and her maid? Why do you think it was done that way?

4. Think of the battle scenes at Agincourt and how they are filmed. What is the weather like on the day of battle? Why do you think there are so many close-up shots? What effect do you think the director was trying to achieve with the slow-motion shots? Where does the camera focus? What do the soldiers look like at the battle's end? What kind of music is played? How does the director use all these elements to express his feelings about war?

5. The courting scene at the end of the play, although romantic, is staged in a stark room with bright lighting. Why do you think this was done? What double message is the director sending the audience?

Suggested Activities

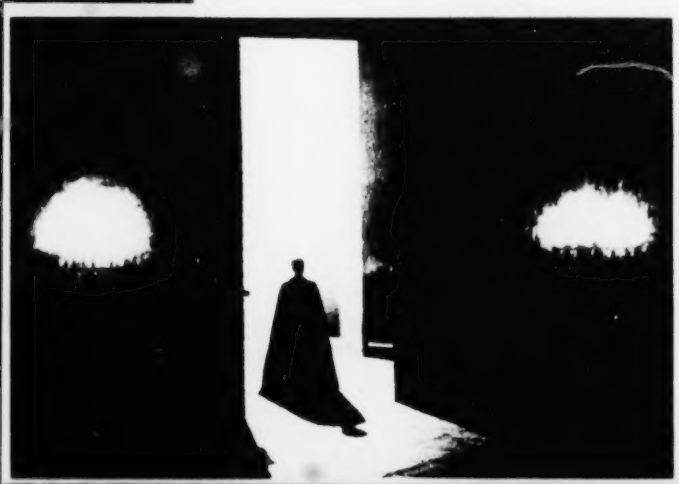
1. You're in charge of marketing this film. Write advertising copy that will convince high school students to see the film. What image would you choose from the film to represent it in an ad?

2. Is Henry a typical Hollywood hero? Explain your answer by comparing or contrasting him with another Hollywood hero.

3. You are the director in charge of translating this film back into a play. How will you do it? What will be lost by making this into a play? What will be gained?

4. Think about the film in its entirety. Write a scene that you think is missing from it, either following, preceding, or in the middle. Why did you choose that scene? How would it change the film?

5. There are many ways to depict war in a film. One of the classic interpretations is Laurence Olivier's 1944 production of *Henry V*. Watch the video of that film and write your review of it. Make sure you cover the general tone of the film and the message it conveys about war. What are the differences between that film and this one? Why do you think the director chose to do it differently?



The young King Henry makes his entrance.

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Cast of Characters

Henry V Kenneth Branagh	*Cambridge* Fabian Cartwright	*Court* Pat Doyle	*Dauphin* Michael Maloney
Chorus Derek Jacobi	*Scroop* Stephen Simms	*Williams* Michael Williams	*Burgundy* Harold Innocent
Gloucester Simon Shepherd	*Grey* Jay Villiers	*Bardolph* Richard Briers	*Orleans* Richard Clifford
Bedford James Larkin	*Erpingham* Edward Jewesbury	*Nym* Geoffrey Hutchins	*Grandpré* Colin Hurley
Exeter Brian Blessed	*Fluellen* Ian Holm	*Pistol* Robert Stephens	*Constable* Richard Easton
York James Simmons	*Gower* Daniel Webb	*Falstaff* Robbie Coltrane	*Montjoy* Christopher Ravenscroft
Westmoreland Paul Gregory	*Jamy* Jimmy Yuill	*Boy* Christian Bale	*Katherine* Emma Thompson
Canterbury Charles Kay	*Macmorris* John Sessions	*Mistress Quickly* Judi Dench	*Alice* Geraldine McEwan
Ely Alec McCowen	*Bates* Shaun Prendergast	*French King* Paul Scofield	*Governor of Harfleur* David Lloyd Meredith

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Henry's old friends — Bardolph, Pistol, Mistress Quickly, Nym, and the Boy — mourn the death of John Falstaff before they set off to join the King's army.

The Bishop of Ely and the Canterbury assure Henry the French throne are leg to press his demands agai

Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey realize King Henry has discovered that they conspired with France to assassinate him.

ENGLAN

Lo

Southampton

23

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William Shakespeare's HENRY V

Directed and adapted by
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Henry spurs his troops onward into battle:
"Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,
Or close the wall up with our English dead!"

Archbishop of
that his claims to
al and urge him
nst the French.

ndon

D

North Sea

Calais

Agincourt

Channel

27

SOMME

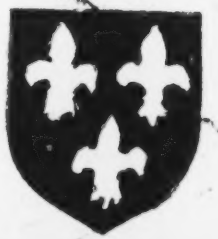
Vastly outnumbered, Henry V and his small, battle-weary army courageously attack the enemy.

28

Harfleur

Rouen

Henry and Katherine, the daughter of the French king, strive to overcome their language barrier.



SEINE

The Dauphin, flanked by his friend the Duke of Orleans, dismisses the threat posed by Henry V's invasion.

Paris

The French king, Charles VI, rejects Henry's claim to the throne but worries as his army approaches.

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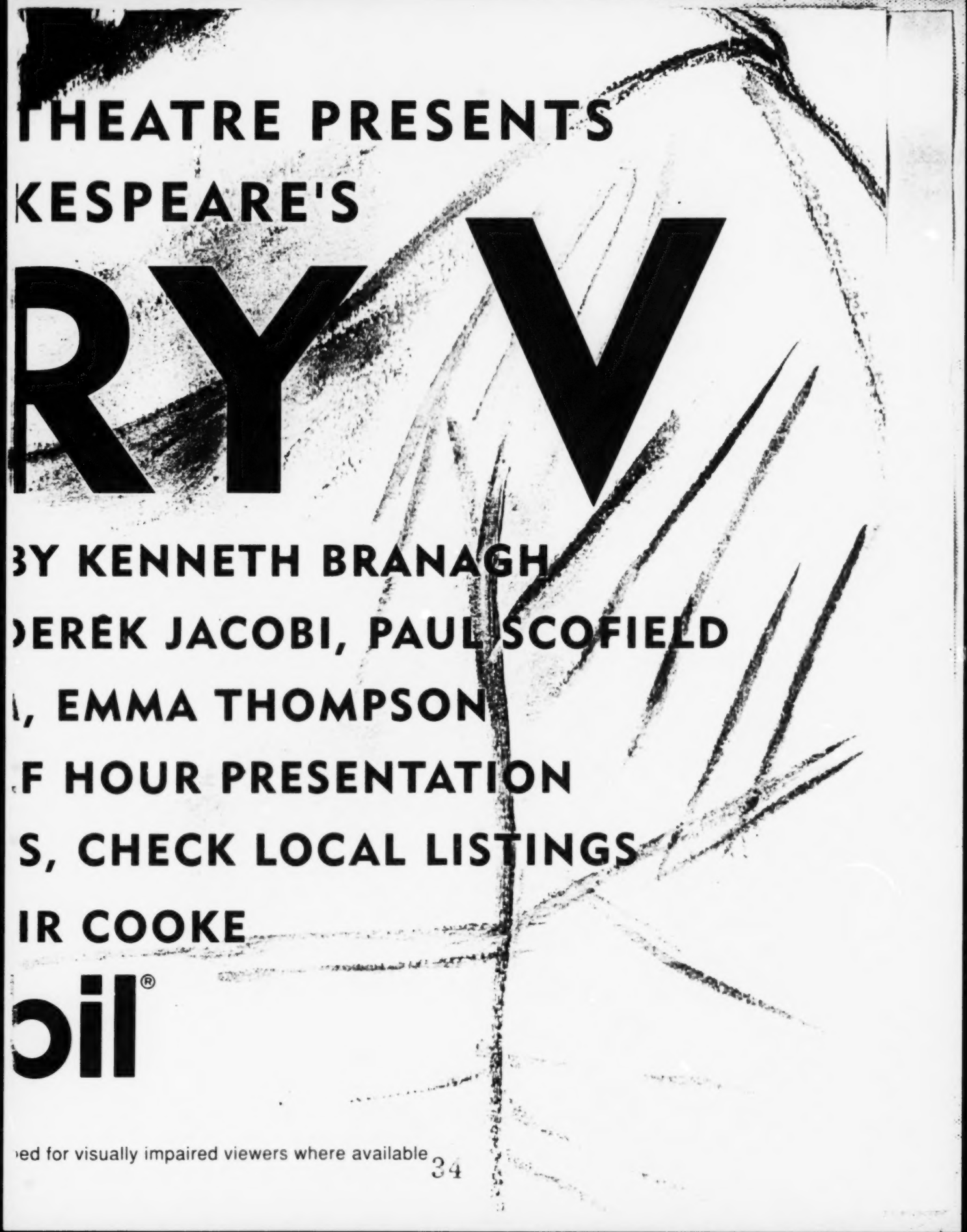
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